

I-95 Richmond Bridge Restorations Project

Frequently Asked Questions



Upham Brook Bridge Overpass, I-95, Richmond, VA (Photo by VDOT)

Why is it necessary to restore these bridges?

The Richmond bridges along I-95 are more than 50 years old. While they are safe, the traffic volume and weight they carry increases every year. It is imperative that we restore them to ensure the safety of our drivers for another 50 years or more.

How is this project different from other VDOT projects?

After two years of preconstruction work under the bridges is completed, major construction activities will take place on I-95 overnight using a state-of-the-art construction method. Large segments of the bridge will be replaced with brand new segments that will be ready for morning traffic. The entire process will happen on one of the busiest interstates in the country with as little inconvenience to drivers as possible.

What bridges will be restored?

The project will restore overpasses that cross the following secondary roads:

- Lombardy Street
- Overbrook Road
- Sherwood Avenue
- Robin Hood Road
- Hermitage Road
- I-95 over the Boulevard
- Ramp over the Boulevard
- Westwood Avenue
- Laburnum Avenue
- Upham Brook northbound (Henrico)
- Upham Brook southbound (Henrico)

Is VDOT planning to shut down I-95 completely at any time during the project?

No. Barring an accident, a weather-related event or the occasional moving of equipment, three lanes will remain open on each bridge during overnight construction. I-95 traffic will return to its normal configuration during the day.



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Are the bridges safe to drive on?

Yes, the bridges are safe to drive on. The aim of the project is to keep them that way.

This project is going to take four years. Can't you work during the day or weekends to complete it sooner?

Much of the two-year preconstruction work that requires no lane closures will be done during the day. The main construction phase, which will require lane closures on I-95, will be done strictly at night when traffic counts are lowest. By working at night, we will save time and reduce motorist frustration.

Why will the construction take place between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m.?

This is when I-95 has the least amount of traffic. Only about 17% of I-95 drivers use the road at this time. The schedule gives the contractor 10 hours to replace the bridge segments when the fewest travelers will be inconvenienced.

How many vehicles use this section of I-95?

Up to 160,000 vehicles per day.

Will you be working on more than one bridge at a time?

We will during the two-year preconstruction phase. The work will take place under the bridges and no lane closures are planned. During the overnight bridge replacement phase, however, we will only be working on one bridge at a time.

What happens if the bridge can't open in time for morning rush hour?

The contractor will be fined if the bridge isn't open by 6 a.m. If this happens, we'll activate VDOT's communications plan and contact local news, police, and other government entities about any potential disruption to the flow of traffic. Also, plans are in place to have detours ready for each bridge if an opening is delayed.

What if there's an accident on the bridge during construction?

An emergency lane will always be open for emergency use. In addition, Virginia State Police will monitor traffic in the work zone. Our goal is to remove any vehicles that block the travel lanes as quickly as possible to keep traffic moving.

What is VDOT doing to ensure driver safety in the work zones during nighttime construction? What happens if an emergency vehicle needs to get through?

An emergency lane will remain open during construction to allow emergency response vehicles quick and efficient access. In addition, safety inspections and evaluations of each work zone will be conducted to anticipate future traffic issues.

Will residents along I-95 hear construction noise during the nighttime hours?

Yes, there will be some noise during construction, but mostly secondary noise from equipment, trucks and construction vehicles.

Will VDOT be installing soundwalls to reduce traffic and construction noise?

No. We only install soundwalls when a new roadway is built or an existing road is widened following a comprehensive environmental study. No travel lanes will be added as part of this project.

How will VDOT communicate with the homeless people who live under the I-95 bridges?

The affected homeless will be informed via flyers as well as through Homeward Virginia before any construction activity begins under the bridge.



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Should area businesses be concerned that VDOT will be encouraging drivers (potential customers) to use I-295 to avoid I-95 construction?

No. We considered the needs of local businesses when planning this project. Crews will only work during non-peak nighttime hours and no work will take place on major holidays. For truckers, I-295 will be a safer route to take.

We will not recommend I-295 for travelers whose destination is downtown Richmond. Our goal is to keep drivers informed about alternate routes to minimize inconvenience.

Why is VDOT waiting until fall 2010 to begin work when the contract was awarded in July 2010?

The contractor has 60 days to complete preparations before work on the project can begin. Preparations include bridge substructure assessments, equipment gathering, hiring construction workers and setting up work zones. More staging is required for longer projects like this one.

How is VDOT going to communicate to drivers about this project?

Drivers will have a number of ways to get construction updates and avoid delays. They can call 511, visit i95bridges.org, or receive Twitter updates @VaDot and @511centralva. Announcements will also be made through radio, billboard and print advertising before and during construction.

Why does VDOT have a public relations budget for this project?

This is a significant project that will last four years and affect thousands of people. Our goal is to communicate to drivers before they reach the work zone. We believe that keeping drivers safe and informed is well worth the investment.

How much will the project cost over the four-year period?

The most recent estimate puts total construction costs at \$105 million.* Although 80% of it will be funded by federal dollars, none of it will come from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, also known as the federal stimulus package.

Why is VDOT spending \$105 million dollars on this project when state agencies are having to cut spending?

We simply cannot risk the safety of I-95 travelers. The existing bridges are more than 50 years old and are deteriorating. Prudence dictates that we proceed.

What percentage of the contract will go to minority sub-contractors?

Archer Western, the primary contractor, will sub-contract 6.02% of the work to minority businesses, exceeding the goal of 5% set by the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise.

How will the project impact the local economy?

According to an independent study, the project will directly generate around 160 new jobs annually in the city of Richmond and Henrico County over the course of the four-year project.

Beyond safety improvements, what other benefits will result from this project?

New construction technologies and materials, such as corrosion-resistant reinforcement, will extend the life of the bridges at least 50 years and will save Virginia taxpayers \$10 million or more in maintenance costs over the next half century.*

Why are you working on the bridges when there are roads that need paving and potholes that need repair?

Restoring the I-95 bridges is vitally important to driver safety and needs to be done now to address our aging infrastructure. We will continue to assess the road condition and schedule maintenance accordingly.

*Economic estimates developed by Chmura Economics & Analytics